

Introduction to American Politics

Week 7

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Overview

- ▶ Overview of nomination systems and their general changes over time
- ▶ Go over paper due **tomorrow**.

Discussion question first....

- ▶ Why do you think having a good system for choosing candidates is important to parties?

The importance of nominations

- ▶ Political parties enact their agendas by winning general elections
- ▶ They want effective campaigners
- ▶ They want to rally their base (easiest through ideological purity)
- ▶ They want to attract swing voters (easiest through moderation)
- ▶ And they want to avoid too much conflict

The shift to popular primaries

- ▶ In the machine era, party bosses hand-picked candidates to be loyal underlings
- ▶ National conventions were used to rally support and negotiate among factions
- ▶ Primaries first began in the Progressive Era, though they could still be controlled by strong party organizations
- ▶ In the 1960s on, further reforms made primaries a more broad-based (but still imperfectly so) means of nomination

What kinds of changes?

- ▶ After the Democratic party saw a controversial presidential nomination in 1968, they implemented more transparent primaries (and caucuses) with proportional representation to select most convention delegates
While the Republicans also adopted primaries, they allowed states to use winner-take-all (in 2012 went more PR)
- ▶ Later Dems and then Reps started using pre-selected '**superdelegates**' to exercise more party control (around 14% for Dems, 6% for Reps)

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- ▶ Why do you think fewer people participate in primaries than in general elections?

How does the presidential nomination process play out?

- ▶ Candidates try to get the support of millions of party faithful while remaining ready for the general election
- ▶ The party sets some regulations (e.g. letting some start early), but the date and format varies by state (until the 1980s CA was very late)
- ▶ Early delegate leads can create momentum, especially in the winner-take-all system (so more so for Republicans); early states matter more
- ▶ Conventions help restore the coalition after primary fights, and present the nominee to the general public

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The 2008 nomination processes

- ▶ **Republicans:** With predominantly winner-take-all system, relatively moderate John McCain got early momentum against fragmented opponents.
- ▶ **Democrats:** Obama and Clinton had a long, bruising fight.
 - ▶ Clinton would have won in 2008 with winner-take-all, assuming people voted the same.
 - ▶ Clinton seemingly expected to win and acted as a moderate. Obama was able to rally liberals on issues like health care and Iraq.
 - ▶ States competed to hold primaries early for extra influence
 - ▶ The battle helped forge strong campaign organization.

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The 2012 Nomination Process

- ▶ **Republicans:** Switched to requiring proportionality for early states.
 - ▶ Romney took longer to come out ahead, though he eventually got momentum.
 - ▶ With relatively extreme opponents, he focused on outlasting the conservatives to try to be a viable general election candidate
- ▶ **Democrats:** With an already sitting president, the nomination was a foregone conclusion. Obama focused on raising money for later.

Side note: The California top-two primary

- ▶ In California, for state and Congressional elections, we use a nonpartisan primary system
- ▶ Everyone votes together, regardless of party, and the top two vote-getters are sent to the general election
- ▶ This often still leads to a Democrat and a Republican, but not always
- ▶ Not used in presidential elections

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- ▶ Do you have any predictions for how the 2016 presidential nomination process will play out?
- ▶ Would you like to see any further reforms in the nomination process?

Essay Review: Why are some people more likely to vote than others

- ▶ Things you need to touch on:
 - ▶ A thesis that touches on why some people are more likely to vote based on others, while discussing age, partisanship, and education.
 - ▶ A discussion of how turnout differs between presidential and midterm election years.
- ▶ Be **ORGANIZED** in your writing. The **QUALITY** of your writing matters. Do **NOT** make broad or vague statements without supporting them with **DATA**.
 - ▶ **BAD Example:** 'Young voters were instrumental in presidential politics in 2008 but not in the midterm elections in 2010.'
 - ▶ **GOOD Example:** 'Young voters were instrumental in presidential politics in 2008 but not in the midterm elections in 2010. They constituted 66% of voters for Obama, however, voter turnout was much lower in the 2010 midterm elections compared to the 2008 presidential election, with turnout being much lower among all groups, but more so for young people.'

An example of how to organize the essay

- ▶ (1) Introduction (includes well developed thesis)
- ▶ (2) A discussion of institutional factors that have affected turnout (i.e. voting distance, early day registration, absentee voting, etc.)
- ▶ (3) A discussion of demographic factors that affect turnout
 - ▶ (a) A section on age
 - ▶ (b) A section on education
 - ▶ (c) A section on partisanship
- ▶ (4) A discussion of the 2014 midterm election
- ▶ (5) Conclusion

- ▶ **At least four sources required.** Thought papers do not count as a source.
- ▶ CITATIONS matter! Especially on turnitin!!
- ▶ Even if you have a citation at the end of *every* sentence, do it.

- ▶ (Keeter and Tyson)
- ▶ (McDonald 2010) OR (McDonald 2008)
- ▶ (Week 7, February 18th)
- ▶ (Highton et al)